

TESTIMONIAL DINNER HONORING CESAR CHAVEZ & DOLORES HUERTA

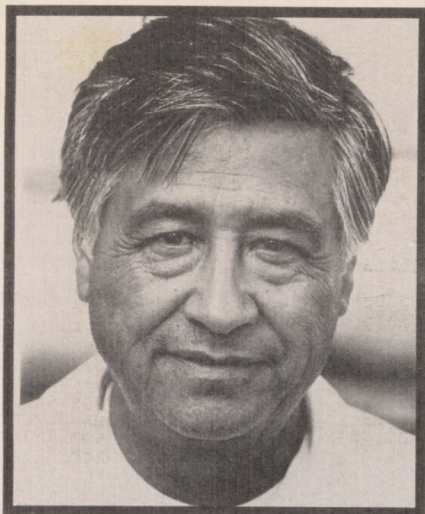


Cesar Chavez

A

TRIBUTE

TO THE INDESTRUCTIBLE SPIRIT OF THE FARM WORKERS



Cesar Chavez, president of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, founded and led the first successful farm workers' union in U.S. history. Through the UFW, tens of thousands of California farm workers have won better lives for their families.

Chavez was born March 31, 1927, on his grandfather's small farm near Yuma, Arizona. At age 10 life began as a migrant farm worker when his father lost his land during the Depression. These were bitterly poor years for Chavez, his parents and brothers and sisters. Together with thousands of other displaced families, the Chavezes migrated throughout the Southwest, laboring in row crops, grapes and tree fruit. Chavez left school after the eighth grade to help support his family.

He joined the U.S. Navy in 1945, and served in the Western Pacific. In 1948, he married Helen Fabela, whom he met while working in Delano vineyards. The Chavez family settled in the San Jose barrio of "Sal Si Puedes" (Get out if you can).

In 1952, Chavez was working in apricot orchards outside San Jose when he met Fred Ross, an organizer for the Community Service Organization, a barrio-based self-help group forming among California Mexican Americans. Within several months Chavez was a full time organizer with CSO, coordinating voter registration, battling racial discrimination against Chicano residents and forming new CSO chapters across California and Arizona.

Chavez served as CSO national director in the late '50s and early '60s. But his dream was to create an organization to help the farm workers whose suffering he had shared. In 1962, after failing to convince CSO to commit itself to farm worker organizing, he quit his paid CSO job, moved his wife and eight small children to Delano, California, and founded the National Farm Workers Association.

These were difficult years for Cesar and Helen Chavez. Mrs. Chavez worked in the fields on weekdays and on weekends with her husband to support the family. Often babysitting his youngest children as he drove, Chavez travelled to dozens of farm communities, slowly building a nucleus of dedicated farm workers members. "If you're outraged at conditions, then you can't possibly be free or happy until you devote all your time to changing them and do nothing but that," he said. "But you can't change anything if you want to hold on to a good job, a good way of life, and avoid sacrifice."

From the beginning, the UFW adhered to the principles of non-violence practiced by Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Chavez conducted a 25-day fast in 1968 to reaffirm the UFW's non-violent commitment. The late Sen. Robert Kennedy called Chavez "one of the heroic figures of our time," and flew to Delano to be with him when he ended the fast.

By 1970, the boycott convinced most table grapes growers to sign contracts with the UFW. That year, to limit the UFW's success to the vineyards, growers in the vegetable industry signed "sweetheart" pacts with the Teamsters Union. Ten thousand farm workers in California's coastal valleys walked out of the fields to protest the grower-Teamster agreements. In 1973, when the farm workers' table grape contracts came up for renewal, most growers signed with the Teamsters, sparking the largest and most successful farm strike in American history.

Many farm workers in the 1980s earn decent pay, have medical and pension plans, and protection from dangerous pesticides. They earn enough so they don't have to migrate anymore with their children; their kids go to school and they can afford to live in decent homes instead of rancid farm labor camps. Yet, only about 20% of California farm workers enjoy these benefits. For the rest, poverty and abuse are still daily facts of life.

Cesar Chavez lives with his family at La Paz, the Union's Keene, California headquarters in Kern County's Tehachapi Mountains. Like other UFW officers and staff, he receives a \$10 weekly stipend plus modest food and living benefits. Farm workers will never again be treated like agricultural implements to be used and discarded," Chavez says. "We have tasted freedom and dignity, and we will fight to the end before we give it up. We have come too far and we have too much further to go to give up now!"

Chavez is currently leading an international grape boycott, which began in July, 1984, called "The Wrath of Grapes". The "Wrath of Grapes" theme symbolizes the threats posed to vineyard workers by the reckless application of pesticides by growers and the threats posed to consumers by the subsequent occurrence of pesticide residues on food.

On August 21, 1988, Cesar Chavez ended a thirty-six day water-only fast to protest the indiscriminate use of deadly pesticides. This long and painful sacrifice shared the suffering of farm workers and their children, and the deep agony of the many families who have lost their loved ones to cancer. The fast was also a heartfelt prayer for the purification and strengthening for all of us, and for a preparation for a multitude of simple deeds for justice, carried out by men and women whose hearts are focused on the suffering of the poor and who yearn for a better world.

Dolores Huerta has been arrested twenty-two times, usually on charges such as trespassing, illegal assembly, or disturbing the peace. She is proud of these arrests because they are part of the Chicano farmworkers fight to build a union and win economic justice. Huerta has been a leader in this struggle called *La Causa* as a brave and passionate organizer, she is a tough negotiator who led the United Farm Workers first successful contract talks in 1966.

Dolores Huerta is herself a Chicana, an American woman of Mexican descent. Huerta was born in Dawson, New Mexico, in 1930, the daughter of Juan and Alicia Fernández. Her father, a miner and fieldworker, was active in the United Mineworkers Union and served in the State Assembly of New Mexico.

When she was five her family moved to Stockton, California. Huerta went to an integrated high school attended by Chicanos, Asians, Blacks, and Whites. She was a Girl Scout for many years and believes that her scouting activities taught her leadership skills and how to deal with people democratically. Huerta attended Stockton College, earning an Associate Arts degree in education in 1953.

After college, Huerta worked as a grammar school teacher, but her dream was to become an organizer for the farmworkers. In 1955, she joined the Community Service Organization (CSO), a group whose aim was to encourage poor people to take power, not beg for charity. Huerta started out as a volunteer on CSO voter registration drives. Working intensely and tirelessly, she gradually took on new responsibilities. As Legislative Advocate and later as Executive Secretary, she lobbied in Sacramento for statewide changes in laws that affected Chicanos, often bringing barrio people along to the state capitol for increased visibility and credibility. The results are impressive: the ability to speak English was eliminated as a drivers license requirement; farmworkers were made eligible for state disability insurance; and state aid programs were extended to resident immigrants.

In 1962, Huerta joined another CSO organizer, Cesar Chavez, to found the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in Fresno. Enlisting the support of unions, student groups, civil rights organizations, and clergy, Huerta and Chavez worked hard to build the NFWA into a strong farm labor movement. One of its first major achievements was the elimination of Public Law 78, a federal law that permitted growers to hire Mexican nationals for temporary field work, at a substantially lower wage than domestic campesinos.

La Huelga-- the great strike of grape harvesters began in the Delano vineyards in September 1965. The NFWA offered its support, and the strike spread. A national boycott of grapes and grape products was launched, mass rallies were held throughout California, and the union was recognized at a few vineyards. In 1966, AWOOC and NFWA joined to form the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) and affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Huerta's strategies throughout the strike ranged from traveling around the country to raise money for the strikers, and lobbying in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to joining picket lines in California.

Huerta recognized that men would stick with the union only if the women in their families also supported it. She worked night and day among the campesinos to set up day-care centers and enlist entire families for picket duty. Huerta's children have participated in many picket lines. (She has eleven children and nine grandchildren).

In 1966, Huerta negotiated the first contract to result from the strike, with Schenely Industries. Sitting down with employers to work out an agreement was a new experience. After studying other unions' contracts for a week and a half, she wrote proposals and submitted them to the union membership for approval. Then she met with company officials to formulate a contract that satisfied the farmworkers' demands. As head of the entire East Coast campaign, Huerta addressed audiences in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, D. C., and Detroit, directing them to stop the sale of grapes.

The boycott was successful, and in 1970 the growers agreed to bargain in good faith. The final wage package in the three year contract was \$1.08 an hour plus 20 cents per box, rising to \$2.05 in 1972. The growers agreed to contribute to the unions health and welfare fund, which supported programs such as a medical clinic and emergency rent support. Also included were a protective contract clause limiting the use of dangerous pesticides, and provisions for a hiring hall, which meant that the union would set the guidelines determining which workers would be hired when jobs were available. After signing the historic contract, Huerta administered the agreements, directed the hiring hall, and trained union members to be negotiators.

Huerta's own example has encouraged many women of the UFWA to participate in political action. One veteran of fields and jails explained, "Mexican women used to do what the men said, but Dolores Huerta was our example of something different. We could see one of our leaders was a woman, and she was always out in front, and she would talk back. She wasn't afraid of anything."

As an organization, the United Farm Workers has come a long way since the first grape strike, and Huerta is as active as ever. In 1973 she was elected its first Vice President. The constant struggle to hold on to the hard won gains of the last two decades is foremost in her mind.



Justice must prevail for the sake of
human dignity. Through unity,
determination and perseverance
we will attain it!

— Manuela G. Sosa D.D.S. - general dentist

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to the
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— Congressman George E. Brown, Jr.
36th District

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Le Saludamos a Usted y al UFW*

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P R O G R A M

- 6:30 No Host Bar Mariachi Music
- 7:00 Welcome Master of Ceremonies Hector Fabela
Pledge of Allegiance
Invocation
Introductions
- 7:30 Dinner Mariachi Halcones and Ballet Folklorico de Aztlán
- 8:30 Graciano Gómez on Media

Joe Baca on Education

Tribute and Introduction to Dolores Huerta by Manuela Sosa

Dolores Huerta
- 9:15 Sam Maestas on Migrant Workers

Tributes to Cesar Chavez by George Aguilar
and Armando Navarro

Introduction to Cesar Chavez by Jack Stowers

Cesar Chavez

Adios y Gracias



De Colores



*De colores
De colores se visten los campos
en la primavera
De colores,
De colores son los pajaritos
que vienen de afuera.
De colores,
De colores es el arco iris
que vemos lucir.*

*Y por eso los grandes amores
de muchos colores
me gustan a mi.
Canta el gallo,
Canta el gallo con el quiri quiri
quiri quiri quiri.
La gallina,
La gallina con el cara, cara
cara, cara, cara.*

*Los pollitos,
Los pollitos con el pio, pio
pio pio pi.
Y por eso los grandes amores
de muchos colores
me gustan a mi.
Y por eso los grandes amores
de muchos colores
me gustan a mi.
(repeat first verse and chorus)*

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